

The Growth of a Relationship
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The care that your child receives from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. is just as important as the care he or she receives before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m. As a result, it is important to establish a solid relationship with those who care for your child during the day. This article discusses the relationship between parents and the staff of child care centers or family child care homes.

Cultivating a relationship between parents and child care providers is a process of growth. Planting the relationship seed early involves getting to know each other from the first contact. The initial meeting with the director of the family child care home or the child care center lays the foundation for the seed to grow. You want to inquire about parent visits, expectations, communication, parent-provider conferences and any other information that will allow your relationship to begin to form. The first meeting helps you determine that this child care provider is the “perfect fit” for your child (see the article, “The Search for the Perfect Fit,” for more information). Once you have chosen the child care location, it is time to nourish what you have planted.

Growing starts as you develop the relationship at parents’ night. Not only will you meet with the director and teachers (child care providers), but also with parents of the other children in their care. Here the center or family child care home provider framework is established and you see the interests and uniqueness of those at the center. What a great opportunity. Here is the time to exchange phone numbers and email addresses for future play dates, carpooling, and other activities. This provides you and the center with an ongoing support system set in place to enhance the development of the children.

Blooming occurs when you are maintaining the relationship with the essentials. This occurs at drop-off, pick-up, and phone calls throughout the week. Without this, the relationship will not survive. During these interactions, it is crucial that all persons involved express their needs and acceptance of one another. Appreciation for the challenges of each other’s roles is helpful. Disagreements will happen. It is how you handle the disagreements that will determine the success and longevity of your relationship with the child care providers. It is necessary to be open-minded. Sometimes it is necessary to be flexible and to agree to disagree.

With your busy schedule, you probably feel like you can never seem to find enough time for all that needs to be done. Talk with the director and child care providers to find times and days that will work for everyone involved to communicate effectively about your child. Being flexible and dependable is crucial to the relationship. Both persons need to value one another’s time and efforts in making the relationship work. If you make an appointment, arrive on time, and if you must cancel, call in advance. This will show respect and appreciation for the other person. Consider which times allow everyone involved to pay attention and share experiences about your child with minimal distractions. Listening to the needs of each other will further the process and progress of your relationship. Fortunately, if you set aside a small amount of time each day to build this relationship, you will save yourself time and energy in the future as you will be able to more efficiently handle situations that arise.

While a flower cannot survive without water, a relationship cannot survive without communication. It is through communication that we build trust and empathy. Empathy allows us to understand what another person is feeling. Both the provider and parent can benefit from putting oneself in the other's shoes. What is the other person's outlook? Imagine taking on the task of caring for another's child and receiving no communication from the parent. Imagine dropping off your child to be taken care of for the day and not receiving any feedback on his or her progress from the provider. Help each other to grow the relationship that will better your child's experience.